



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Independence Day Celebrations

**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich's at Independence Day
Celebrations
U.S. Embassy Canberra**

(As prepared – July 3, 2013)

Thank you for joining us here to celebrate our Independence Day.

[Special thanks to Navarro Moore.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank all of our generous sponsors. There are several who came in after our early banner deadline, so I'd especially like to thank ABABCO, Cisco, General Dynamics, Hawaiian Airlines, MSA Australia, P&H Minepro, Rolfe Motors, Walt Disney, the National Basketball Association, and the National Football League.

I also want to recognize the Hess Collection and Peter Lehmann Wines. Their founder, Peter Lehmann, passed away on Friday after a courageous battle with kidney disease. Peter Lehmann was a legend and one of Australia's most respected winemakers. He will be missed by us all.]

For those of you who are being technical, the Declaration of Independence was actually adopted on July 4. For those of you being very technical, we should be celebrating on July 5th here in the Southern Hemisphere. However, that would mean working on a holiday. And we wanted to give our embassy staff a day off, or we might have yet another revolution.

Today we celebrate our 237th anniversary. In 1776, the Founders offered the American people a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all of us are created equal. There had never in the history of the world been a government made up of the people, by the people, and for the people.

No one knew if it would work. In fact, one of the Founders, Ben Franklin, was asked right after the Constitution was signed, what form of government it would be. And he said: "A Republic. If you can keep it."

"If you can keep it."



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So on July 4 every year, we celebrate more than the birth of our nation and the vision of our founders. We celebrate the lives and vision of those who have kept it. We celebrate the efforts of hundreds of millions of men and women who, for the past 237 years, have ensured that we keep our republic.

People who worked together in good times and bad. Who paid their taxes, voted for their leaders, and petition their government. Men and women who served and sacrificed in their armed forces. Who worshipped freely and who respected the beliefs of others. People who built businesses, gave to charities, volunteered their time at schools or coaching, or helping those less fortunate.

We celebrate the men and women who worked to make an impossible dream living, breathing reality. We celebrate by doing what we do now: gathering together with friends and saying what we think and want for our future. We don't call these things freedom of speech, or freedom of travel, or freedom of assembly. Because of those who came before us, we just call it "living."

We call it life.

People from all over the world have made the United States what it is today. We are a nation of immigrants. The faces of our people are the faces of the world. Our traditions are drawn from every continent. So it is with great pleasure that we celebrate our Independence Day with people from many countries. And, especially, with our great Australian mates here in Canberra.

Today is not a day for long speeches. Some of you may be thinking that no day is a day for long speeches. Our second president, John Adams, said the 4th of July shouldn't be honored with speeches but "with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other."

So – in order to do it up right – we have the pomp and parade of our Marines. We have fantastic shows and sounds from the members of the Royal Military College Band. We have games in plenty, including batting cages and a pitching mound from our good friends at Major League Baseball. We've got bells and horns on the classic American muscle cars from our friends at the American Car club and other generous donors. And walking among you are champions of sport. Olympians and Paralympians. Players of basketball, rugby, football, – all three kinds – ice hockey, volleyball, softball, golf, bodybuilding, and baseball.

Of course, our ties in sports and games reach across every dimension. In January 1914, our Major League Baseball teams the New York Giants and Chicago White Sox played at



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the Sydney Cricket Grounds. By the way, the President was delighted to hear that his White Sox beat my Giants 7-5. Even if it was 99 years ago.

It is connections like these that endure. Major League Baseball is coming back to Australia with the Dodgers playing the Arizona Diamond backs for their season opener in Sydney next March to see who is the second best team in baseball. Behind my Giants.

And that is what I'd like to end my remarks with tonight. The games we play together. The celebrations we have together are more than just a fun afternoon. They reflect something about who we are and the spirit that binds our nations together.

Baseball's values are simple.

It is about putting yourselves on the line for others. Everyone has to step up to the plate and take a swing for their team.

It is about perseverance. Even the best batters know they will get out 7 out of 10 times. But they do get discouraged even in their worst times.

It is about teamwork. No one can win the game alone, it takes everyone hitting and fielding together.

And most of all, it is about hope. It's a sport where, no matter how many runs you're down, as long as you have a turn at bat left, you can still come back and win.

These values reflect the very best in us.

Willie Mays, our (virtual) guest of honor, typifies that spirit and those values. He had what could be described as a rocky start in the Major Leagues. It took 13 at bats for him to get his first hit. When he did, though, it was magical. It took another 13 for him to get his second hit. After that unpromising beginning, he went on to become one of the greatest baseball players of all time. He gave us some of the most iconic moments in baseball history. Through it all, he acted with courage and dignity, earning a reputation as a peacemaker. In retirement, he has chosen to be mentor to other players and to work with underprivileged children – working to help them get college educations and better their lives.

That is the spirit we celebrate today. The spirit of hope, of perseverance, of confidence, and the belief that free people working together toward a common goal can do anything. It's the spirit that has allowed us to keep our democracy – and keep it strong – for the past 237 years.



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So thank you, Australia, for sharing that common spirit. And thank you all for celebrating our birthday with us tonight.

It is now my great honor to introduce _____

Thank you.